

**Západočeská univerzita v Plzni**

**Fakulta filozofická**

**Bakalářská práce**

**Intercultural Aspects of the Communication with a  
Special Regard to the Business Communication**

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**Bakalářská práce**

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Special Regard to the Business Communication**

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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci zpracoval(a) samostatně a použil(a) jen  
uvedených pramenů a literatury.

*Plzeň, duben 2012*

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

This bachelor thesis deals with the forms of pronominal, as well as nominal addressing forms, across different languages and cultures, mentioning some specific manifestations of national stereotypes and patterns. The author narrowed the scope of her research only to the study of verbal, spoken communication. The principal aim is to explore similarities and variations, perchance changes in the addressing system of a particular language. This bachelor thesis will also discuss the organizational structure of an enterprise and external influences occurring there while having an impact on the forms of communication. Exploring this dimension of communication might help understanding cultural bound communicational patterns and thereby ease the process of understanding. In today's world of bound markets and interconnected economies is appropriate communication of essential significance to do a successful business.

*“To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others.”* <sup>[1]</sup> This quote by Anthony Robbins expresses how important it is to understand different communication strategies. To be able to communicate properly we have to perceive the world surrounding us, pay attention to the social factors of the communicative situation, gather information, use it correctly and hereby avoid possible misunderstandings. Therefore decided the author to dedicate this thesis to all people who are interested in interpersonal communication and who are limited neither by the borderlines of his/her country nor by any language boundaries.

## 2 DEFINITIONS

The author decided to introduce few definitions of some words used in this bachelor thesis for better understandability and transparency. The words are given in the order as they appear in the text.

- **Addressing** is the way of speaking to people when encountering them while using different forms of pronominal address forms, courteous titles, names, etc. There are two main types of pronominal addressing, these are the V-form and T-form.
- **Status** is the position of a person in his/her social or professional life, indicating the duties, liabilities or benefits ensuing from the particular status.
- **V-form** is a term which stands for the formal form of pronominal addressing of people. This term was introduced by Roger Brown and Albert Gilman in their book “The Pronouns of Power and Solidarity” in 1960.
- **T-form** is a term which stands for the familiar form of pronominal addressing of people. This term was introduced by Roger Brown and Albert Gilman in their book “The Pronouns of Power and Solidarity” in 1960.
- **Honorific** is a form of expressing certain grade of honour or respect towards the addressee. An honorific status commonly assigns a specific status to a person.
- **Lingua franca** is a language widely used among many people who do not share any common mother tongue; when two conversation participants are taken into consideration, lingua franca is the third language, distinct from both native languages these two participants speak. Latin retained its status as lingua franca for more than one thousand years, particularly for its function as the official liturgical language of the Roman Catholic Church and also



because it was the only medium of scholarly exchange. In the late 16<sup>th</sup> century - together with the transformation of European society, decline of the Church and rising power of France and England - the strong status of Latin started to be on decline, being substituted by national languages of Europe. From the 17<sup>th</sup> century until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, lingua franca of the formed world was French. After that, French was replaced by English which is lingua franca of today's world. We can still distinguish many other lingua francas in the world, serving for particular regions, such as Spanish, Chinese or Russian. <sup>[2]</sup>

- **Seniority** is a characteristic feature of a person who is either older than his/her partner or he/she is a holder of a higher academic degree or professional rank; someone with a longer span of service.
- **Superiority** is a state of having a higher position or an advantage within a system.
- **Hierarchy** is a system of arranging people and/or things according to their abilities, skills, status, title or professional rank.
- **Interlocutor** is a person taking part in a conversation. He/she can also be called conversational partner/participant.
- **Patronymic** (also otchestvo) is a middle-name originating from the father's name or from a paternal ancestor. Utilization of this form can be found in Dutch, Russian or Swedish.
- **Melting pot** is a term indicating a place where people of different races, cultures and nations, with no identical behavioural patterns or distinct stereotypes create a new integrated society. The very heterogeneous society becomes homogenous, forming a new culture. This term became generally used after the introduction of

the play “The Melting Pot” by Israel Zangwill. A typical example is to be found in the USA or Israel. <sup>[3]</sup>

### 3 COMMUNICATION

#### 3.1 DIMENSIONS OF COMMUNICATION

The term “communication” is very hard to be described because of its multivalent nature. While searching for a fitting definition the reader will, for sure, come across a huge amount of definitions. However, the author considers it impossible to choose one and only applicable definition. According to Richard Brunet-Thornton (Introduction to Cross-Cultural Management: Theory and Practice, 2010), there are eight dimensions of communication to be distinguished:

1. Communication is a *process*: a process with no definite beginning or end, a process of changeable and not stable nature.

2. Communication is *dynamic*: it is a process of continual changes and progresses. Because of its dynamic nature there is no possible way to make any graph or definition for the phenomenon of communication.

3. Communication is *interactive*: it takes place among people who consciously participate in it and expect some kind of reactions from their conversation partner.

4. Communication is *symbolic*: either verbal (spoken words) or non-verbal symbols (gestures, facial expressions, tone, voice, accent, speed of speech) are arbitrarily chosen by the speaker to interact with other communication participants.

5. Communication is *intentional*: it is a conscious action, mostly of an informative nature.

6. Communication is *contextual*: context means all those circumstances and the environment in which the communication process takes place. The context is a very important feature of communication because it sets the right environment for the correct perceptions and facilitates avoiding misunderstanding or wrong understanding.

7. Communication is *omnipresent*: communication is a process happening all the time, under any circumstances, it is led by all people, all around the world.

8. Communication is *cultural*: the style of communication is culture bond, being shaped by local standards and habits, using known stereotypes. Members of particular cultures transfer those habits and stereotypes from generation to generation while integrating new elements and forgetting or consciously omitting former ones. This last, the eighth, dimension of communication (communication is culture bond) is closely related to the topic of this bachelor thesis, as it is focused on the forms of addressing within different languages and cultures, therefore it is an inseparable part and a manifestation of communication.

Especially nowadays, in the world of bound markets and economies, an efficient and clear way of communication is one of the most essential roads to success and achievement of set goals in the global business negotiations. Sometimes, the business people might be facing misunderstandings ensuing from different communication patterns. This bachelor thesis will be dealing with only one aspect of communication, with addressing, because it is the very first element occurring in every communication process and the communication participants use it for the whole existence of a communicative situation.

## **4 CONCEPTION OF ADDRESSING**

### **4.1 DIMENSIONS OF ADDRESSING**

Addressing as a way of expressing our relationship to some other person, assigning the status of people, a part of getting to know each other, is an inseparable part of our lives, the way we talk and impress people. The choice of addressing occurs very early in every relationship, at its very beginning, and may pose several problems for the interlocutors. There is no uniformly applicable system of addressing and interaction which would be working for all languages and cultures - that is the reason why there are distinct forms of addressing, different ways of perception of foreign people talking, of using the language, possible misunderstandings or even misinterpretations occurring. Each language, culture or a community has its own politeness strategies and traditions. Addressing is closely connected to the matter of "being polite", yet what is considered being polite may differ from individual to individual, from situation to situation. Various concepts of politeness will be namely discussed in this bachelor thesis later.

We can pose a question whether is addressing dependent on the relationship between the speaker and the addressee, or on the sole pragmatic context of the situation, or on the communicational pattern of particular nationalities. We would probably notice, especially in the business world, that people behave more formal, prefer using the V-form while talking, as it also makes the atmosphere more official. This might be a piece of proof of how the pragmatic context of the situation could influence people. There are, definitely, certain exceptions. Namely the Americans who predominantly prefer the nominal form of addressing, use the first name of addressee and omit too formal usage of titles because - it is perceived as an element of togetherness and friendliness among interlocutors. Other nationalities might be unpleasantly surprised by this "friendliness" and it could make them feel uncomfortable. Everybody, not only business people, who gets in touch with foreign people should go

beyond his/her own cultural stereotypes, respect cultural differences and be perchance conscious of the fact that in spite of his/her striving things might not work out as he/she wishes them to. A significant point at this time is also being aware of our own mental models, stereotypes and cultural predispositions because firstly we should understand our own culture and respect it to be able to understand others.

All languages which were examined within this research, being members of the Indo-European language family; except for Japanese which belongs to the Japanese language family and Turkish being a part of the Altaic language family, specifically of the Turkic group of languages; distinguish between the formal and the familiar form of pronoun addressing. This difference between the second person pronouns helps expressing our attitude, friendliness, respect, esteem, confidence, acquaintance, honorific and many other elements of our attitude and/or relationship towards the addressee. Honorifics are defined as *“direct grammatical encodings of relative social status between participants or between participants and persons or things referred to in the communicative event.”*<sup>[4]</sup> In this bachelor thesis the usage of honorifics (T-/V-form) is discussed; honorific titles and some specific forms of addressing worth mentioning are also described.

Roger Brown and Albert Gilman (1960) introduced expressions T-form and V-form, where the T-form refers to the familiar and the V-form to the formal pronoun of addressing. The source language of these expressions is Latin, where *tu* refers to the familiar T-form and *vos* to the formal V-form of addressing. Therefore, as we can see, the initial letters are identical with most of the initial letters of address pronouns used in particular languages. In Czech it is *ty* and *Vy*, in Dutch *je* and *u*, in English nowadays only one variant exists, which is *you* (unlike former *thou* and *ye*), in French the interlocutors use *tu* and *vous*, in German *du* and *Sie*, *tu* and *voi/Lei* (when *Lei* is considered rather archaic) in Italian. Portuguese uses *tu* and *você*, Russian *ty* and *vy/Vy*, Spanish *tú* and *usted* and Swedish *du* (in specific cases also *ni* for the formal usage). In Japanese

more varieties exist, according to the level of honorification the speaker wants to express. The Japanese language enables its speakers to show their relationship and attitude towards the addressee very clearly: should *otaku* be used, you talk in a very formal way, the pronoun *anata* is less formal, *kimi* is an informal address and *omae* is utilized in rather informal situations for very close people and we would hardly hear someone addressing the second person while using this pronominal form publically.

[5, 6]

## 4.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

As there are not many publications dealing with the topic of addressing people, particularly with different forms of addressing within diverse languages and nationalities, the author considers a questionnaire to be one of the best possibilities for collecting a wide range of adequate up-to-date and distinctive data. That is the reason why a questionnaire was chosen to be the mean of this research and it is also the main resource of information for the author of this bachelor thesis. The questionnaire was made in Czech, as it is author's mother tongue, and translated into English. The English language was chosen because the selected respondents do understand English and also because of the wide use and worldwide knowledge of this language, since English has become the lingua franca of today's world. The main function of this questionnaire is to collect information on addressing people; the forms of addressing; factors connected with addressing which might influence the choice; contemporary and past differences in the forms of addressing; specific language features and also personal, anonymous information that the informants optionally provided. Some of the respondents also offered an anecdote related to this topic, thus making it more authentic and interesting. The author involves these anecdotes into this thesis, as it might bring this topic closer to the reader and make it more authentic. Exemplary questionnaires are to be found as appendices to his bachelor thesis.

The questionnaire opens with a basic question whether people prefer the form of addressing typical of their country - they remain by the pattern learnt as little children from their parents and surrounding; or they accept the form of addressing people according to the habits of the country they currently live in, thus trying to make them feel more comfortable and striving to truly integrate themselves. The third, not very often chosen possibility of answer is that people just create their own system of addressing other people, considering neither the language habits of his/her mother tongue nor of the country he/she is currently living in.

The questionnaire is divided into three parts: "the business environment", "environment consisting of family and friends" and "personal details". The first part of the questionnaire is dedicated to the business environment as the author considers an appropriate communication in today's world of global business connections and markets being crucial for a successful business. The part dealing with the environment of family and friends should demonstrate possible influence which our personal habits and familiar stereotypes might have on the professional sphere of our lives, either intentionally or unintentionally. The author chose division into these two main parts because of the fact that we may encounter using different forms of addressing when talking with people in privacy and, on the other hand, at work or during an official negotiation or meeting, where also other participants are to be found. The reason for distinct addressing form in our privacy and at the work place could be the attempt to make business atmosphere more serious, to strengthen the status of the second person, to make other participants feel comfortable, being on the same relationship and hierarchical level. The last part of the questionnaire, where the informants stated their personal information, is also of a great use because thanks to it the influence of several personal features and/or experiences could be noticed and taken into consideration.



According to the sequence of the constituent parts in the questionnaire, the author decided to start with description of the part dealing with the business environment. The first part (1) discusses the usage of the formal and the familiar form of addressing (the two singular pronouns of address) being used currently and in the past, as well as the reason and time of the potential change in the form of addressing. Later on, the second part (2) demonstrates the explicit nominal addressing. In the question 2-b the issue of addressing third person, an absent person who is not participating in the conversation, is mentioned. The following parts (3, 4, 5, 6) deal with such factors which influence the selection of an addressing form and what kind of influence (if there any is) does addressing have when talking about our lives and relationships. The respondents could choose the grade of importance by the named influences. In the tables, there are following grades offered: very important, important, less important, unimportant, I do not know. Question number seven (7-a, 7-b, 7-c) analyses the attitude of people during a sudden encounter and also facts that influence their choice of the address form. As the author experienced from the outcome of her research, 23 respondents use the formal form of addressing when meeting a person who is unknown to all conversation participants (see question 7-a). When meeting a person who is unknown only to the speaker (to the respondent of the questionnaire), 21 respondents answered they use the formal addressing form as well. Let this be an evidence of slightly reserved behaviour while meeting a new person for the first time. We cannot, of course, generalize the outcomes while taking into consideration how distinct each individual is and realizing, there is no uniformly applicable pattern of behaviour.

The second part, focused on the family life and closer neighbourhood of an individual, is at first focused on the T- or V- pronoun form of addressing used currently and in the past (familiar or formal form). Next, the nominal form of addressing used by particular people (currently as well as in the past) is discussed (2-a, 2-b). Questions 3-a and 3-b are

considering the phenomenon of meeting new people and the problem of how to address them, how to interact with them. The last question is devoted to diminutives, as it is a very specific, personal type of addressing.

The last part of the questionnaire is devoted to personal details, the data which the informants were willing to provide, adding complementary information that makes some discussed matters clearer and completer.

In order to get the respondents who had answered the questionnaire closer to the reader, the author decided to introduce general information, sourcing from the stated responds. The first question, asking about the age of the respondent, is giving a multiple choice possibility to answer. Most of the respondents who participated in the research belong into the age group of 20-29 year old people (20 of the 31 respondents). Then, an open question comes, asking about the nationality. There are following nationalities included in the research: German (4 respondents), Russian (4 respondents), American (3 respondents), Czech (3 respondents), French (2 respondents), Dutch (2 respondents), Italian (2 respondents), Japanese (2 respondents), Portuguese (2 respondents), Spanish (2 respondents), Swedish (2 respondents), Turkish (2 respondents), British (1 respondent). The third question on the list is a closed question about the sex of the respondents as there are differences in the approach among nations to be found, as well as between men and women. There were 21 men and 10 women who took part. Question number five (5-a, 5-b, 5-c) is concerning the size of the hometown where the respondents have lived so far. Because of the fact that people are influenced by their surrounding a lot, the author placed there a question finding out whether the respondents have ever lived in a foreign country. 23 of 31 respondents answered they have lived in a foreign country and they also named them; the author decided to introduce five most frequent ones from the wide amount of various answers: Spain (5 respondents), the United Kingdom (5 respondents), the Czech Republic (4 respondents), the United States of America (4

respondents) and Germany (3 respondents). The seventh question, surveying the reached education, offers certain possibilities where three, most frequent levels of reached education were Bachelor Degree (10 respondents), Master Degree (7 respondents) and the Secondary education with a final exam (6 respondents). As one part of the questionnaire is focused on the business environment, there is a question surveying whether the respondents are employed or not to be found. Provided that the respondent is employed, he/she should have also stated the branch in which he/she works and his/her post. The ninth question explores whether the respondents do commonly speak or write any other language than their mother tongue. Hereby, the author wants to state the found result when 25 of 31 questionnaire participants stated they do commonly use some other foreign language. Three most frequently used languages were English (21 respondents), Spanish (9 respondents) and German (4 respondents). The very last question of this part is researching whether the respondents are in touch with people with whom they speak with a foreign language, distinct from their mother language. 25 of the respondents answered this question in a positive way, when being mostly in touch with English, Spanish, German and Czech nationalities.

### **4.3 EXTERNAL INFLUENCES**

The distinction in the form of addressing people around us usually follows specific rules and recommendations originating from the historical context, nature of people, long-time habits, etc. These rules are language and culture connected, determining the appropriate behaviour and etiquette. The questionnaire includes a question whether people prefer the form of addressing typical of their country; or whether they adapt the form of addressing other people to the habits of the country they currently live in; or, as the last possibility, they create their own system of addressing people which does not consider the habits of their mother country nor the country they live in.

13 of the asked respondents keep the form of addressing typical of their country, while 13 of the respondents adapt the form of addressing people according to the habits of the country they currently live in. Because of these results we cannot assume that there is one universally shared pattern when deciding how to address other people. The author believes the reasons for this are different attitudes and perceptions of the speakers, as everybody is a member of a particular culture and it influences and shapes its members' perception. There is one more possibility of answer in the questionnaire, i.e. people create their own system of addressing, considering neither the habits of their mother country, nor of the country they currently live in. The author believes this phenomenon does not occur very often as only two informants chose this possibility. Both of them are Japanese who spent a part of their lives in Germany. This might be a proof of how confusing the complex hierarchical structure of Japanese honorifics and possibilities of pronominal addressing can be, even for its native speakers, as it subsequently causes dilemma which addressing form is the appropriate one. Three of the respondents did not give any answer.

Should the author be occupied with the question if there are any particular issues influencing the choice of the addressing form, this question has to be confirmed. In the sense of Otakar Patočka (*O tykání a vykání*, 2000), the author decided to differentiate four groups of influences which may affect the choice of the form of addressing. The constituent influences introduced in the questionnaire are assigned to these following groups. The first group includes *personal influences* such as: keeping one's distance, respect, esteem, fear, liking or disliking of someone, long-time habit. Into the group of *social and class influences* belong these: respecting the working hierarchy, requiring the office hierarchy, professional hierarchy, professional hierarchy (academic degree), working hierarchy (post in the company), conversation participants, listeners who do not take part in the conversation, relationship with the other person. The third group, called, *historical and time influences* encompasses: age

of the speaker, age of the addressee, age difference between the speaker and the addressed one, impossibility of changing the way of addressing, time the speaker and addressee know each other. *Other types of influences* form an extra group of influences such as: sex, appearance, situation, atmosphere. The results of the research show that the group comprising *social and class influences*, together with the group of *historical and time influences*, are the most influential ones when the speaker is deciding what kind of addressing form to use; the matter of working hierarchy, the age difference between the speaker and addressee and the time interval they know each other, are namely the most influential ones of all offered influences stated in the questionnaire. Nine respondents chose these matters to be of a very high importance (see question 5). To outline the contrary, with the aim to show the disparity, the group of *other types of influences* resulted as the least influential one; types of influences encompassed in this group (sex, appearance, situation and atmosphere) seem to have rather insignificant role in people's communication procedures. To better demonstrate possible exceptions, there is a notice in one questionnaire to be found, saying that the respondent uses the person's first name for all people the respondent meets; the notice was made by a respondent of Swedish origin which proves the decline in usage of the V-form in the Swedish language. The exact data following from the research are to be seen below.

Outcome of the question (5): Which factors influence the choice of selecting the form of addressing (results are stating the number of respondents who chose the particular answer)

	<b>Very Important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Less Important</b>	<b>Unimportant</b>	<b>I do not know</b>
<b>My age</b>	2	14	4	8	0
<b>Person's age</b>	4	18	3	2	0
<b>Person's appearance</b>	2	6	8	12	0
<b>The age difference</b>	9	14	2	3	0
<b>Sex</b>	0	6	6	16	0
<b>Professional hierarchy</b>	6	16	4	2	0
<b>Working hierarchy</b>	9	14	4	1	0
<b>Time you know each other</b>	7	18	2	1	0
<b>Situation</b>	6	11	8	2	0
<b>Atmosphere</b>	5	13	5	5	1
<b>Conversation participants</b>	1	13	8	4	1
<b>Listeners</b>	0	6	9	12	1
<b>Relationship</b>	5	13	2	5	3

## **5 FORMAL ADDRESSING**

### **5.1 GENERAL CHARACTERISTIC**

Characteristic elements of the formal, non-intimate V-form of addressing can be distance, seniority, superiority, hierarchy, expression of one's status, respect or just an effort to stay polite. According to the results of the questionnaire, most of the respondents consider formal way of addressing as strengthening the hierarchy at the workplace: 24 of 31 respondents (see question 6-a); let this be a clear evidence of the way of perceiving the vertical organizational structure in many companies. As the author was told, some people want to show their esteem and respect towards second person, therefore they prefer the V-form of addressing; it allows them expressing their attitude while making the working atmosphere more pleasant, 6 of 31 respondents identify with this motive for choosing the formal address. 5 of 31 people stated that formal form of addressing creates a feeling of togetherness within the workplace as there are no differences among people, no need to stress when and how to use the informal honorific.

### **5.2 IMPACT OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF A COMPANY ON ADDRESSING FORMS**

The matter of using either V-form or the T-form at the workplace is, according to the author, closely connected with the size and structure of a company as well. In a small sized enterprise the employees know each other better, have closer and friendlier relations, therefore they tend to use the T-form. On the other hand, an enterprise of a big size is more anonymous, keeping people at distance by its largeness as well as by a huge number of employees; at such place, it is much more difficult to establish a close relationship. At the same time, at a workplace with few employees a relationship full of respect and admiration can be created and the interlocutors might tend to use the V-form as an appropriate

expression of such feelings. There is an important point to be aware of: the organizational structure of a company, which is shaped by the type of company, by the market it is focused on, by technologies used, by its leaders and employees; influences the relationships within a company as well. The author decided to distinguish among four main types of organizational structure of a company. These types differ primarily by the relationship between the corporation and its employees: this means in which way the employees are treated, how they are motivated and rewarded, how the authorities are defined - whether vertically or horizontally. Some of these types of the organizational structure of a company were introduced in the book written by Alfons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner (*Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Diversity in Global Business*).

The first type of organizational structure to be mentioned is the family structure which could be characterised by personal and face-to-face relationships while being power-oriented as well. The power is presented by the superior leader who is, more or less, perceived as a father, caring about his employees. The role of people, the employees, is stressed- their experience and knowledge are essential for the existence of the company. There is a reciprocal effort when the company is doing a lot for its employees and they, in return, do their best for the company, their breadwinner. This type of company is to be found especially in late industrialized countries such as Italy, Japan or Spain.

Another type, widespread in the western world, is the bureaucratic division within a company. In such company, the exact roles and tasks are given at the very beginning of the cooperation. Everybody is obeying his/her superordinate boss, the instructions and tasks given by him/her. We can observe more frequent usage of titles, e.g. on the office doors of the employees or on the business cards.

Next type to be described in this bachelor thesis is the egalitarian structure of a company. This organization could be defined as team-



oriented, placing tasks and projects which are solved by teams and specialized groups of employees with a coordinator leading the whole process. Relationships in such type of company are slightly neutral as its members can take part in more projects, being responsible towards more leaders; there is no time to evolve a deeper relationship because of existing time limited projects.

The last type of organizational structure of a company is a company with minimal hierarchical structure, focused on highly-concentrated individuals. This type of organization is to be found mostly in the English speaking world. We cannot, of course, unambiguously distinguish these types of companies in today's world; all these organizational structures are mixed and therefore hard to be precisely differentiated.

### **5.3 ADDRESSING FORMS OF THE V-FORM**

In every language system there are several alternatives for formal addressing appearing, among them such which are never or rarely used. In the questionnaire, there were following options to choose: Mr./Mrs./Ms. + surname, Mr./Mrs./Ms. + academic degree + surname, Mr./Mrs. + academic degree, professional rank. In some languages there are given patterns to be obeyed. Especially the use of academic degrees across languages differs a lot. In any case there is one rule which is, more or less, obeyed in all languages when using the academic degree - the speaker has to choose the highest achieved degree of the addressed person, otherwise he/she might be regarded as being oblivious or even rude. Czech is one of those languages in which people, very often, address their conversation partner with their academic degree if they have any. Not using the degree at all might be considered being rude and the addressee could feel offended after that. On the other hand, it is quite common to address the university teachers with their first names, in English which would be in case of Slavonic languages, namely in the Czech language, impossible.

## 5.4 DYNAMICS OF PRONOMINAL ADDRESSING

As many people might experience personally, there is often a transition from the formal V-form to the less formal T-form among people, even in the business environment. This issue is also included in the questionnaire (see question 1), polling the time-interval in which the address change happened and also discussing the main reasons for the change. The given answers are stated below, showing the number of respondents who chose the particular answer:

Getting to know each other	6 of 31
Better confidence between people	3 of 31
Change of the post in the company	2 of 31
Getting older	1 of 31
Your relationship towards the addressee	1 of 31
Becoming friends	1 of 31
Agreement between the interlocutors	1 of 31
Getting closer	1 of 31
No change	17 of 31
No answer	2 of 31

From the above stated results we can see that the pronominal form of honorific does not change very often, nearly one half of respondents remain by the same form all the time (17 of 31 respondents). Some of the answers were only hypothetical (4 hypothetical answers). The reason for change was mentioned but the respondents persist by one form and no transition from V-form to T-form actually happened. The main reason for changing the addressing form is obviously establishment of a closer, more

confidential relationship, in which the T-form better expresses friendliness and intimacy between the interlocutors.

The approximate length of the time horizon in which the change of the pronominal addressing form happened differs from person to person; stated answers in the questionnaire are also very distinct, confirming this phenomenon, giving 1 week, half a year, 5 months or even 5 years as the time interval. This is another evidence of how individual matter addressing forms are.

An interesting point is that a transition from T-form to V-form never occurs. On the other hand it is an understandable and logical matter; interlocutors either keep the formal way of talking or start using the less formal T-form.

## 6 FAMILIAR ADDRESSING

### 6.1 GENERAL CHARACTERISTIC

When addressing people in the familiar way, using the T-form, our attitude is usually understood as friendly, familiar and warm. At this point, an emphasis on the word “usually” is put as we know there are such languages (in the case of this bachelor thesis it is English, perchance Swedish) that do not make any difference between the T- and V-form: there is only one type of pronominal addressing used, which refers to the familiar T-form. Once are these languages regarded as being too informal, the other time absence of warmth is stressed. The reader of this bachelor thesis could notice a problem how to show the friendly attitude and kind of informal relationship of the interlocutors occurs. *“By using one’s first name, or the addressee’s first name, the speaker is evoking a certain prototype of human relations.”* <sup>[7]</sup> Using a nickname or an affectionate name is also one sign of a closer relationship between the interlocutors. When mentioning Swedish, the author experienced during an interview with Amanda, a 22-year-old Swedish native speaker, that nowadays the Swedish do not use the V-form to address people, although it still exists. Not even for elderly or superior people. Amanda, who is working in a retirement-home, said she never uses the formal V-form, not even in her job.

### 6.2 SPECIAL CONCEPTS OF FAMILIAR ADDRESSING

There is an interesting observation to be mentioned, which was happening not only in the Czech Republic, but also in other countries where the political establishment was based on the communist theory. In those times the T-form was widely used to create an atmosphere of an economically, socially and politically equal society; the T-form was there not to express friendliness and some kind of a closer relationship, but to demonstrate equality and brotherhood: a society with no differences.

Therefore we should be careful while interpreting any kind of work or speech originating from those times. The memory of that might be one of the reasons why Czech people stay more formal and distant in these times as well, in spite of the great influence of slightly “informal” English language. As the author personally experienced from the narrations of interviewed people, Czech people usually persist by the V-form of addressing because of their desire to express their esteem towards the second person.

The author would like to share another experience she made when interviewing a Russian native speakers. In the case of Russians, a problem, which pronominal form to choose occurred. “If that is of any importance to you, we often address people, except for co-workers, by their first name together with their middle name, which is a derivative name of their father’s name,” noticed a 20-year-old Russian. The author decided to analyse this phenomenon closer. Having a paradigmatic name Ekaterina Alekseevna Kolosova, we distinguish three types of names: Ekaterina standing for the given first name; Alekseevna, a middle name referring according to the patronymic system to her father’s name (otchestvo); and Kolosova which stands for a standard surname. However, as it was said, only the first name together with the middle name are commonly used; mentioning this example it would be: Ekaterina Alekseevna. See an illustrating example of the patronymic system existing in the Russian language:

Father: *Alekseev Ivanov Kolosov*

Daughter: *Ekaterina Alekseevna Kolosova*

*“Russians follow this custom and are more likely to call each other by their given name and patronym, than by their given name and surname.” [8]*

An interesting point in this chapter is also the usage of surnames for addressing friends in Portuguese. The author had heard many times

Portuguese male speakers talking and addressing each other by their surname. After several interviews with those speakers she experienced, it is a common feature of communication among male speakers with no specific tone or meaning; surname is used by close friends as well as by people who do not know each other a lot.

In many nationalities, there is a habit of kissing, hugging or touching while encountering and saying goodbye, as a demonstration of rather closer relationship. This phenomenon takes place especially among members of southern nations such as Spanish, Portuguese or Italians. Author of this bachelor thesis is not going to deal with these non-verbal expressions, although she considers this way of expressing oneself highly interesting and worth studying. An important issue the author experienced, namely from the Portuguese respondents, to be mentioned here is that especially these non-verbal expressions might cause misunderstandings since other nationalities, not used to express themselves in this way, could believe their relationship with the addressee is much more intimate than it actually is. In another case they might be shocked or even offended by such way of behaviour. And on the contrary: nationalities restraining in physical expressiveness might make the addressee feel uncomfortable, insulted and unhappy while “not touching”.

From this point of view we can say that neither “being informal” nor “being formal” are universal phenomena but rather cultural bound strategies persisting in the nature of people. We should not judge other nationalities and their natural attitude, as well as we should not be subjects of bias. The important fact to be realized here is that due to the communicative situation, circumstances and different configurations, formality as well as informality might cause misunderstandings and might be misleading.

### 6.3 ADDRESSING FORMS OF THE T-FORM

In the questionnaire, there are following possibilities of familiar nominal addressing to be found: using the first name and the nickname in the case of business environment; first name, nickname, naming the relationship (e.g. mom, granny), or naming the relationship together with the first name (granny Rose) are offered in the second part, discussing the environment of family and friends. Should the first part, dealing with the business environment, be mentioned, the results of the questionnaires show that people prefer using the V-form for superior colleagues and new customers. Results stating the chosen forms used currently are introduced below:

<b>Addressee</b>	<b>Familiar form</b>	<b>Formal form</b>
Superior colleague	14	19
Subordinate colleague	24	10
Co-worker	29	3
Colleague from your office	28	4
Long-time customer	17	16
New customer	3	27

Some of the stated results are not in concordance with the total number of respondents (31 respondents in total) who participated in the questionnaire because some of the respondents chose both answers (T-form as well as V-form) for their answer. Two respondents do only use the T-form for addressing people within their business environment; one of these respondents is from the United Kingdom and the second respondent is from Sweden.

We can see a clear evidence of prevalence of the T-form within our families and closest surrounding, according to the results of the

questionnaire. The majority of, in total 31, respondents chose the T-form for the current pronominal addressing in all cases:

<b>Addressee</b>	<b>Familiar form</b>	<b>Formal form</b>
Mother/Father	27	3
Grandmother/Grandfather	24	6
Aunt/Uncle	25	6
Mother-in-law/Father-in-law	17	10
Step-siblings	17	3
Partner's children	19	1
Partner's grandchildren	17	1
Mother's partner/Father's partner	14	8
Neighbours	18	13
Friends	30	1
Old friends	29	2
Partner	25	2

Some of the above introduced responses were only hypothetical as the respondents do not have such relationships in their lives.

#### **6.4 NICKNAMES AND AFFECTIONATE NAMES**

Very special forms of nominal addressing, worth mentioning, are diminutives, nicknames and affectionate names. Using these forms, the interlocutor unambiguously expresses an informal, in many cases a very close, relationship between him/her and the addressee. Users of diminutive forms visibly show emoting and indicate certain affection, which



is, certainly, omitted in the business relations as we experienced before. Namely diminutives (in many data sources often shortened to DIM) are used in all languages the author examined; even in Japanese which is kind of a very formal language avoiding too much of expressivity. Some people might consider this form of addressing childish and immature, but we all have definitely used this form during our lives, at least for babies, little children or just to make fun or to ease the atmosphere.

There are several types of creating diminutives to be differentiated: short form of the original name; suffixes; rhyming nicknames, changed in order to make the pronunciation easier, especially for/by little children. The way of adding a suffix to the original form is the predominant type of creating a diminutive. The author decided to take one, relatively international name - *Peter*, to show how does this suffix attaching by certain languages work.

Czech: Petr - *Petrík*

German: Peter - *Peterle*

French: Pierre - *Pierrot*

Italian: Pietro - *Piero*

Portuguese: Pedro - *Pedrinho*

Russian: Pyotr - *Petya*

Spanish: Pedro - *Pedrito*

In some of the above mentioned languages exist also other possibilities of creating a diminutive. When talking about German, one can also use the suffix *-lein*, or *-chen*. An interesting point here is that all words arising like this: by adding one of those three suffixes, automatically become neutral, regardless of the original gender of the word. Diminutive forms can be made not only from nouns but in particular languages, such as Czech, Portuguese or Spanish, an adjective can also have its own

diminutive form. Having an exemplary adjective “small”, there is no way to make a diminutive from this word in English; on the other hand, adding a suffix in other languages creates a diminutive easily: *malý* – *maličký* (Czech), *pequeno* – *pequenino* (Portuguese), *pequeño* – *pequeñito* (Spanish). Usage of these diminutive adjectival forms is very favourite and widespread especially by the Southern nations, not having any distinctly different tone but easing the situation, making people closer and more relaxed.

A question about using diminutive forms of nominal addressing was also included in the questionnaire (see question 4; part: family and friends). 20 of 31 respondents stated they use these forms, namely for their friends (9 respondents; some of the respondents specified this opened question nearer - for old or very close friends), siblings (8 respondents), partner (5 respondents), family members (4 respondents), children (2 respondents) or during some funny situations. According to author's observations of Spanish and Portuguese people talking, the fact, mentioned by Anna Wierzbicka (Cross-Cultural Pragmatics: the semantics of human interaction, 1991), that these nationalities do use diminutive forms abundantly can be confirmed. It is a part of their warm nature. *“Rich systems of diminutives seem to play a crucial role in cultures in which emotions in general and affection in particular is expected to be shown overtly.”*<sup>[9]</sup>

To discover the real origin of a nickname could be a difficult task as it does not have to have any link to the name or surname of its holder. Many times, nicknames are derived from the real name of the person (either from the first name or the surname), yet a huge amount of nicknames has its origin in a story, habit, appearance or quote of the marked person.

## 7 INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH

As all learners of English and even native speakers of English know, it is extremely difficult to distinguish between the formal and the familiar way of communication in English. The former *thou*, referring to the T-form, and *ye*, used for the V-form, were generalised into *you* for both cases. *“The English “you” is, of course, very democratic, it is a great social equaliser, but it can also be seen as a distance building device”*<sup>[10]</sup>. As the author has experienced from the questionnaires, there is nothing that would actually influence English speaking people, when addressing other people; they have, in fact, only one possibility of addressing which is the pronoun “you”. Once they are considered being too informal, lacking tact and respect, other time they make everyone feel kept at distance because of no distinction between the formal and informal way of pronominal addressing. The only unlimited choice they have occurs during the nominal form of addressing the second person. There are several options to choose and the native speakers can quite well differentiate the distinctions. Nevertheless, English speaking people prefer rather informal way of communication with frequent use of first names for everybody. Especially Americans with their common use of the first name might be considered too direct and impolite; the truth is this is their concept of politeness, based on friendliness and equality. Reason for this attitude might be deeply rooted in the nature of the American society which is very distinct, encompassing numerous nationalities and cultural stereotypes. A well-known term, describing this reality is called melting pot. According to the result of the research, the author dares to believe that English does have a big impact on people using this language as 21 of 31 respondents stated they do speak English and commonly use this language for communication. The Japanese language could be seen as an illustrative opposite to English; offering a wide range of pronominal addressing forms allowing the speaker selecting desired grade of distance or esteem. Moreover, in Japanese, there exist several pronouns standing

for the English pronoun “I” enabling to demonstrate the hierarchical position of the speaker.

Above all, English influences its users by the above mentioned favourite use of first names. This phenomenon has become very favourite in the Czech society as well, which the author can confirm personally. People who do not know each other much but do spend some time together do not want to feel so distant; therefore first names and the V-form is being used in such cases: “Petře, posad’te se.” (Czech); “Nehmen Sie Platz, Peter” (German); “Take place, Peter.” From the named examples we can see usage of formal addressing form in Czech and German while making it more familiar and relaxed by using the first name of the addressee. This phenomenon did not exist in the Czech society before and nowadays it became relatively popular among all generations. There are no such devices in English that would enable its speakers being formal and slightly informal at the same time. Typical examples of situations where the mixture of formal way of addressing and first name occurs can be language courses, academic environment or even business people who know each other for some time and prefer leading the negotiation in such spirit. This addressing form can be also found in the written communication, having the already mentioned functions.

## 8 CONCLUSION

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to discuss the usage of pronominal and nominal addressing forms within diverse languages and different cultural conceptions of this phenomenon. A part of this thesis is dedicated to the organizational structure of a company as an important influence when considering the internal relations, the layout of a workplace and the ways of addressing there. A special regard is devoted to very specific concepts of addressing and behavioural stereotypes occurring within particular cultures and languages. The author's main objective was to expound some universal stereotypes and on the other hand to outline the culture bound habits.

Data for this study was collected in several locations in the form of a questionnaire, as the author considers it to be a relevant way of doing a research while getting sufficient and adequate amount of information about a topic which has not been discussed thoroughly yet. Most of the data was obtained in Barcelona (Spain) and Pilsen (Czech Republic), while asking the respondents in person. This way of research was more contributing because the author was able to immediately answer respondents' possible questions, she could provide them with a detailed explanation and could also make some extra notes from their narration. Other questionnaires were delivered to the author via e-mail, since it was impossible to encounter the informants face to face. The respondents were allowed to attach any note or commentary which many of them did and this was of a great use for the author.

Contribution of this bachelor thesis resides in its applicability while doing business, negotiating or just encountering members of foreign cultures who use distinct language and communicational patterns. The research done within the framework of this thesis could ease the communication and possible misunderstandings arising when encountering new people who are not native speakers of reader's mother tongue. Another significant contribution of this thesis is seen in the

insufficient amount of literature and studies dealing with the topic of addressing among people, although it is one of basic elements of the interpersonal communication. The author is of such opinion that it would be useful to continue in this research, to encompass new languages and cultures, to increase the number of respondents and to integrate new phenomena of communication and addressing patterns.

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## **11 ABSTRACT**

This bachelor thesis deals with pronominal and nominal forms of addressing, encompassing various languages and culture bound stereotypes. The thesis is divided into seven chapters, each discussing different aspects of this topic, also mentioning specific national manifestations of communication.

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to explain the usage of addressing forms across different languages and hereby ease understanding of national stereotypes.

Results of the realized research form the whole thesis; respondents' notes, statements and/or opinions are included in the thesis as well.

## 12 RESUMÉ

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá pronominálními a nominálními formami oslovení, zahrnuje různé jazyky a kulturně podmíněné konvence. Práce je rozdělena do sedmi kapitol a každá z těchto kapitol rozebírá odlišné aspekty, týkající se tohoto tématu. Zmíněny jsou také kulturně podmíněné komunikační projevy.

Cílem této bakalářské práce je vysvětlit užívání forem oslovení v rámci rozdílných jazyků a tím ulehčit porozumění národním stereotypům.

Výsledky provedeného výzkumu utváří celou práci; obsaženy jsou také poznámky, výpovědi a/nebo názory respondentů.



## **13 ZUSAMMENFASSUNG**

Diese Bachelorarbeit beschäftigt sich mit den pronominal und nominal Anredeformen und umfasst sowohl unterschiedliche Sprachen, als auch kulturbezogene Stereotypen. Die Arbeit ist in sieben Kapitel unterteilt, die sich mit einzelnen Aspekten dieses Thema befassen. Es werden auch die nationalbedingte Kommunikationsausprägungen erwähnt.

Ziel dieser Bachelorarbeit ist den Anredeformgebrauch innerhalb verschiedenen Sprachen zu erklären und damit Verständigung von Nationalstereotypen zu erleichtern.

Ergebnisse der durchgeführten Forschung gestalten die ganze Arbeit; Bemerkungen, Behauptungen und/oder Meinungen der Befragten sind auch beinhaltet.

## **14 APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX 1 - Questionnaire**

**APPENDIX 2 - Questionnaire**

**APPENDIX 3 - Questionnaire**